

# DON'T PANIC!

YOUR GUIDE TO:

## Helping young people to be safe online

It's time to come out of the dark when it comes to keeping young people safe online.

There may be risks - but risk doesn't always equal harm.

$E=MC^2$

It's all relative

- **Educate** yourself about the benefits and risks of being online to help young people be safe
- **Manage** settings and know where you can go for help and support
- Keep **calm** and have open **conversations**.

The use of the internet and social media has become a vital part of young people's education and socialisation.

For some, it's a lifeline in helping them to find their "tribe" – the people who understand them and share similar ideas, thoughts and experiences.

When children are young, adults spend time teaching and supporting them to keep them safe – how to swim, safely cross the road, and so on. But when they start going online, many adults don't feel comfortable or don't think they know enough to offer assistance and guidance.

The online environment is an ever-evolving space, so it is crucial to learn how to respond to and manage risks associated with young people being online.

A big part of this is helping them build resilience, as well as increasing their awareness of the support and resources available to them.

**When asked how adults could help – young people said "Adults need to listen. We want to have a conversation - not be lectured, watch educational videos or have information pushed at us. Talk to us and help us explore the issue in detail and in depth."**

Yes, there are risks to being online – there are bullies, trolls and, in the worst case, predators. But risk doesn't always equal harm.

Here are some steps you can take to help educate young people, and yourself, about online safety:

- Talk about what might be harmful, why and what they can do to respond.
- Play online games together and talk about the content, challenges and other competitors.
- Ask the children in your care to teach you about the latest apps – yes, you will get eye rolls, but this is your chance to get a glimpse into their world and interests.
- Educate yourself, and them, by visiting the Office of the eSafety Commissioner's iParent portal for information, hints, tips and tools visit <https://esafety.gov.au>

**Educate**



# Manage

Start talking about online safety with children and young people early.

Help them to identify things that are suspicious, and to respond to inappropriate requests or disrespectful and hurtful comments.

This will help empower them to take control of their digital life and be safer online.

Take a genuine interest in children's and teens' online life.



Remember to think about your online life too. Think about the photos and content you are sharing and your own privacy settings, and make sure you are modeling correct behaviour.

**"Teens report being frustrated when adults ask them to have high safety standards but the adults don't do the same."**

Also, do a privacy settings check every so often to keep them safe – social media platforms are constantly updating and changing these.

## When they want to create their social media account(s), use it as a chance to talk about:

- *Minimum age requirements* – most social media platforms have these
- *Ground rules* – amount of time spent online, who to accept friend requests from and share photos with
- *Privacy settings* – these can be switched on to protect privacy online and restrict who can see, comment and share what is posted
- *Help and advice* – how to get help with and report inappropriate behaviour. Social media platforms have internal reporting tools and there are also useful links and tools on the Office of the eSafety Commissioner's website - <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>



## TOP TIPS FOR HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE STAY SAFE ONLINE

-  **Focus on the positives** about going online, not just the dangers
-  **Be curious** and increase your knowledge of the online environment
-  **Keep talking** with young people about their online activities
-  **Stay up-to-date** with the latest trends in the digital world
-  **Discuss the dangers** and appropriate responses to risks and harm
-  **Encourage empathy** and respect in interpersonal interactions at all times
-  **Be brave** and have open and honest conversations about difficult subjects
-  **Model appropriate behaviour**, both online and offline
-  **Empower young people** to respond to inappropriate online content/contact
-  **Watch for changes** in online activity, or moods/behaviour. Seek support!

For more info, see the Top Tips factsheet, plus other great resources at <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/online-safety-resources>

Many young people hesitate to tell an adult if they've seen inappropriate content or had inappropriate contact online because adults get angry and confiscate or restrict access to their device or favourite game.

Try to stay calm. While you might be upset, it is more constructive to have an open and calm conversation and identify appropriate ways to respond together.

### Cyber bullying

Young people can't always escape bullying. When it's online it follows them everywhere, even into their home through devices such as mobile phones.

Expecting them to talk to the other person or report inappropriate behaviour might not be the best approach – they might be embarrassed, fear other people will make fun of them, or even face isolation or more victimisation.

These feelings can prevent them from asking for help and taking action to protect themselves.

**"Bullies often say the things that you are already saying in your own head. You begin to die inside. You don't know how to deal with it – if you confront the bully things often become worse." - Respondent's comment in The Diana Awards annual survey of young people.**

Talk about what could happen if they complain or report and how you can work together to respond to what's going on.

Check out "Bullying. No Way!" (<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>) for more information on bullying and remember you can report cyberbullying through the Office of the eSafety Commissioner's website.

### Relationships

Young people are curious. Exploring information about sex and adult relationships online is not uncommon and is part of developing a sense of their own identity as an adult.

If they have accessed pornographic content online, take the time to discuss that this isn't how loving, adult relationships are in real life. Research shows that pornography negatively shapes teenager's ideas about consent and what's acceptable in a relationship.

Honest and open conversations about what actually makes a respectful relationship can help to shape more appropriate attitudes, especially with regards to consent.



### Sticks and stones

Teaching young people to be empathetic and respect other people, whether it's face-to-face or online, is important.

It can be easy to forget there is a person on the other end of online interactions. If your child has posted comments that are hurtful, talk to them about how another person might feel seeing these.

Ask them to read it aloud – discuss how it felt to say it to someone's face and how you felt hearing it.

### Cyber creeps

There are people online who may attempt to manipulate, coerce or threaten young people into sharing inappropriate and personal information. Teens report feeling both pressured and disgusted, but also flattered and excited when they receive an unsolicited image or a request to share an image.

Check out "So you did a thing" (<https://www.wearthorn.org/stop-sex-tortion/>) to help you both make sense of what's happening and visit <https://www.esafety.gov.au/image-based-abuse> for support.

Calm conversations

## USEFUL LINKS

**Queensland Family & Child Commission** - <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/>

**Office of the eSafety Commissioner** - <https://esafety.gov.au/>

**Department of Education** - <https://www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/health/cybersafety>

**Project Rokit** - <https://www.projectrokit.com.au/>

**Bravehearts** - <https://bravehearts.org.au/report-sexual-assault/join-the-dots/>

**Carly Ryan Foundation** - <http://www.carlyryanfoundation.com/>

